

Worksession

Agenda Item #	5
Meeting Date	July 19, 2004
Prepared By	Jessie Carpenter for Council
Approved By	Suzanne Ludlow Community & Gov't Liaison

Discussion Item	Council Rules and Procedures
Background	<p>As a result of an ongoing discussion of setting forth rules and procedures for Council meetings, City Council members drafted the attached resolution for discussion at the July 19 worksession. The Council adopted a similar resolution in 1993 (attached).</p> <p>Additional comments on the resolution have been provided by Councilmember Seamens. His e-mail is attached.</p> <p>For your information, I have also included the current instruction sheet for residents, "How to Participate in a Council Meeting,"</p>
Policy	The Council may adopt rules of procedure governing the conduct of Councilmembers and citizens at Council meetings and worksessions.
Fiscal Impact	None
Attachments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft resolution • Comments from Councilmember Seamens • Resolution 1993-55 • How to Participate in a Council Meeting
Recommendation	Discuss the draft resolution.
Special Consideration	

Introduced by:

Resolution #2004-

COUNCIL RULES OF PROCEDURE

WHEREAS, the Council wishes to conduct its meetings in such a way as to maximize the opportunity for Takoma Park residents to participate; and

WHEREAS, Council meetings that continue until a very late hour inhibit the ability of residents to address the Council on issues that concern them; and

WHEREAS, the Council also wishes to conduct business in an efficient and timely manner.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City Council of Takoma Park, Maryland does hereby establish the following rules of procedure to govern the conduct of Council meetings:

- 1) Council meetings will commence at 7:30 pm unless otherwise advertised.
- 2) Council announcements are allowed at the beginning of each meeting. Announcements made by Councilmembers should be informational in nature. Discussion of substantive issues should be avoided during the announcement period. At other times, Council comments should address the item under discussion.
- 3) Council announcements are followed by time for public comment at each meeting. Speakers may address items that are on the worksession agenda or any other topic. However, if the Council agenda includes voting on a resolution or ordinance, public comment should be given at the time the item is considered. Residents who wish to address the Council shall come to the podium, and state their name and street for the record. In general, speakers should limit their comments to no more than five minutes. During public comment, Councilmembers shall limit their comments to asking the speaker for information or providing them with information. All those present at Council meetings shall permit speakers to express their opinions without interruption.
- 4) Following public comment, each agenda item will be taken up. The Mayor, a Councilmember, or a City employee generally summarizes the content of the agenda item and states the action the Council is considering.
- 5) There are two kinds of Council meetings: legislative sessions and worksessions. Legislative sessions are generally held on the second and fourth Mondays of the month. At legislative sessions, the Council votes on ordinances and resolutions. Anytime the Council votes on legislation, there is time for Council discussion and for public comment, followed by the vote. Councilmembers are encouraged to work with City staff before

Council meetings to make editorial changes to ordinances or resolutions. During Council meetings, Councilmembers shall keep editorial changes to a minimum.

- 6) At worksessions, which are usually held on the first and third Mondays of the month, the Council discusses issues that may become future legislation, but generally does not take votes. A special session for voting on legislation may be included in a worksession if voting is time-sensitive. Worksessions allow members of the Council to discuss issues among themselves and with City staff and occasionally special guests. If residents wish to be recognized during worksessions, it is best if they let their Councilmember know of their interest before the meeting.
- 7) The Council may hold public hearings, which generally occur near the beginning of a meeting, in order to get public comment on an issue. Public hearings may be more structured than other public comment periods in order to accommodate many people who wish to speak. When a large number of people wish to address the Council on an issue, speakers may be asked to sign up to speak and limit their comments to three minutes. After everyone has had an opportunity to speak, speakers may address the Council a second time for an additional three minutes. The Council discourages the practice of ceding time to another speaker given the multiple opportunities to speak. If someone is unable to attend a public hearing but wishes to submit testimony in writing, it can be emailed, mailed or faxed to the City Clerk. Written testimony will be copied to the Council and included in the official record of the hearing.
- 8) At the discretion of the Mayor, non-controversial resolutions or other matters may be passed as part of a consent agenda. If any Councilmember wishes to discuss an item on the consent agenda, that item shall be removed from the consent agenda and placed on the regular agenda for that meeting.
- 9) Council meetings shall be recorded on an appropriate media and shall be preserved for at least one year. Meetings and worksessions will be simultaneously broadcast on the Takoma Park cable channel. In addition, videotapes of the meetings will be available for the public to check out from the library. Copies of the videotapes are also available upon request if costs are paid for by the recipient.

Adopted this ____ day of _____, 200__.

Attest:

Catherine E. Waters, CMC
City Clerk

Councilmember Seamens' Comments:

Here are my comments (the numbers reference the "rules of procedure" in the draft):

1. I suggest we also include a fixed cutoff time for meetings (11pm?). To extend a meeting beyond the cutoff time, would require a motion, second and vote of a majority.
2. I'm not sure "informational" covers everything. Requests for future agenda items and directions to the City Manager come to mind as other items appropriate for Council comment period.
7. I believe people should be allowed to cede their time to others, if they are present when the time is used. Some people may not be willing to speak and wish for someone else to speak for them. More importantly, on issues where a group wishes to present a comprehensive statement, the message isn't lost by switching between people. I would say, though, that when a person cedes their time, they lose claim to "multiple opportunities to speak."
9. Shouldn't this mention written minutes, and clarify our position on worksession minutes? It should also say that written minutes are kept indefinitely. This paragraph seems to mix "appropriate media" and "video tapes." I suggest we say something like, "audio/video recording on a media that is commonly available to household consumers." And finally, as I said last night, we need to keep audio/video recordings for at least five years.

Terry

Introduced by: Councilmember Porter

RESOLUTION #1993-55

COUNCIL RULES OF PROCEDURE

WHEREAS, the Council wishes to conduct its meetings in such a way as to maximize the opportunity for citizens to participate; AND

WHEREAS, long Council meetings that continue until a very late hour inhibit the ability of citizens to address the Council on issues that concern them; AND

WHEREAS, the Council also wishes to conduct its business in an efficient and timely fashion.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City Council of Takoma Park, Maryland, does hereby establish the following rules of procedure to govern the conduct of council meetings:

- 1) Council meetings and Worksessions will commence at 7:30 p.m. unless otherwise advertised.
- 2) Announcements made at the beginning of council meetings should be informational in nature. Discussion of substantive issues should be avoided during the period of time set aside for announcements.
- 3) As each agenda item is taken up, the Mayor or a member of the Council shall summarize the content of the agenda item and state the action the Council is considering.
- 4) Citizens who wish to address the Council must be recognized by the Mayor before speaking, must state their name and address for the record, and must direct their remarks to the Council.
- 5) Councilmembers who wish to speak must be recognized by the Mayor before speaking and must address the issue under discussion.
- 6) All those present at Council meetings shall permit speakers to express their opinions without interruption.
- 7) In general, speakers should limit their comments to no more than five minutes. When a large number of citizens wish to address the Council on an issue, speakers shall:
 - a) Sign up to speak on a form designated by the City Clerk, and
 - b) Limit their comments to no longer than three minutes, in order to give all those who wish to speak an opportunity to be heard in a timely manner. After all those who wish to speak on an issue have spoken, the

Mayor may allow those who have already spoken to address the Council a second time.

8) During citizen comment period and public hearings, Councilmembers' comments shall be limited to asking informational questions of speakers or responding to requests for information.

9) Councilmembers are encouraged to work with city staff before Council meetings to make editorial changes to ordinances or resolutions. During Council meetings, Councilmembers shall make every effort to avoid purely editorial changes to the language of ordinances or resolutions. Such changes may be ruled out of order by the Mayor.

10) At the descretion of the Mayor, noncontroversial resolutions or other matters may be passed as part of a consent agenda. If any Councilmember wishes to discuss an item on the consent agenda, that item shall be removed from the consent agenda and placed on the regular agenda for that meeting.

11) Meetings and worksessions of the Council shall be recorded on audio tapes and videotape and simultaneously broadcast on the Takoma Park public educational and governmental cable channel. Videotapes of Council meetings and worksessions will be preserve for one year, audio tapes will be preserved for three years, and copies of the videotapes will be available to the public for the cost of the tapes and the copying.

Adopted this 24th day of May, 1993.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN A CITY COUNCIL MEETING

There are two kinds of city council meetings: legislative sessions and worksessions. Legislative sessions are generally held on the second and fourth Mondays of the month. At legislative sessions, the council votes on ordinances and resolutions.

Worksessions are generally held on the first and third Mondays of the month, but may also be held on other Mondays, after a legislative session. At worksessions, the council discusses issues that may become future legislative items, but does not take votes.

Council meetings begin at 7:30 pm. At the beginning of each meeting, there is a time set aside for public comments. At legislative sessions, the council also takes public comment on each ordinance or resolution before the council votes on it. Because there is a time set aside for comments on each issue at a legislative session, you are asked hold your comments on that issue until the council gets to it, rather than speaking to the issue at the public comment period.

The council may also hold public hearings on an issue, usually at the beginning of a legislative session. Public hearings are a more structured way for the council to get public comment.

For large public hearings, you may be asked to sign up in order to speak, and the speakers will be called to the podium to speak in the order in which they are signed up. In other cases, come to the podium when you are recognized by the mayor.

When you come to the podium, please identify yourself with your name and the street on which you live. You will generally have three minutes to speak. The light on the podium will be green when you begin speaking, turn yellow when you have one minute left, and turn red when your time is up. The purpose of the time limit is to allow everyone who wants to speak to have an opportunity to do so in a timely manner. Unless the number of people speaking is unusually large, you will have another chance to speak after everyone else has finished. Because speakers will have a second opportunity to finish any unfinished statements, the council discourages the practice of ceding time to another speaker. The council wants to hear from everyone who comes to speak.

If you are unable to attend a public hearing, you may submit your testimony in writing to the City Clerk via clerk@takomagov.org or by mail to City Clerk's Office, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park, MD 20912. Written testimony will be copied to the Council and included in the official record of the hearing.

At worksessions, members of the council discuss issues among themselves and with the city staff. You may make comments at the public comment period at the beginning of the meeting. Occasionally, the council will ask a resident who is involved in an issue they are discussing to join them in the discussion. If you want to be involved in a council discussion at a worksession, let your councilmember know of your interest, preferably before the worksession.

(City Council contact information may be found on the back of this form.)